



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

ST. PAUL AS A BUSINESS-MAN.

By Rev. Professor A. C. ZENOS,

Hartford, Conn.

As language is commonly used, the term business-man is applied to those whose sphere of activity is mainly in commerce. But every man takes part in commercial affairs, be it ever so slightly, and so far forth maintains a business character. What was St. Paul's business character?

It would be unfair, of course, to estimate the business talent of the great apostle by standards developed and recognized as valid in the nineteenth century. The differences between his age and ours are radical. Commerce during the apostle's period was not systematized; its methods were not uniform and precise as those of modern commerce. Its relations were not entered upon with the same care and almost scientific preparation. It was not as emphatic and differentiated a department of life as it has come to be since then. A good business man accordingly could do and say many things which his fellow-tradesmen of to-day would consider unbusiness-like.

At the same time one whose main occupation was different from that of the merchant would not resort for those figures of speech which men always draw from the more striking departments of life to the domain of mercantile pursuits. Hence the allusions to business found in the writings of the first Christian century are not of the distinctest, though numerous enough and suggestive if made the subject of study. Our Lord himself often appeals to the commercial instincts of men; and the tradition is trustworthy which ascribes to Him the saying, "Be ye skillful money changers," because He so often in His authentic sayings explicitly recommends the cultivation of the commercial faculties and virtues. So also the Apostle Paul uses commercial language quite profusely, and if we do not find it as striking as the parallels and figures of speech drawn by him from the race-

course, the athletic games and the court of justice, it is because the code of business rules and practices did not offer as vivid imagery, being itself in a vague condition. Neither can we think it strange that writing to the church in commercial Corinth he does not allude to the business movements of that great centre.

It must also be borne in mind that the apostle was not primarily a business man. His life object was entirely different and, though not inconsistent with the thoughts and motives of the business world, it did not directly create in him interest in the mercantile operations of the day; while at the same time as far as these operations beset and imperilled by their temptations and excesses the souls of men—the apostle's special charge—he could not but antagonize them. In so doing he would so represent his thoughts as to make himself appear in radical conflict with the essential principles of commerce.

Accordingly we find him limiting enthusiasm for business-transactions, directly or indirectly, in the following particulars:

1. He *subordinates commercial obligation* to more important interests, which do not have special correlatives in the business world. An instance of this we may see in 1 Cor. 9: 15–23. Here the apostle recognizes the commercial value of his services, but waives his right to the value represented in them, in order that he may the more effectually bring about certain higher ends he has in view. Cf. also 1 Cor. 10: 33, and 2 Cor. 9: 7–11. In the latter passage emphasis is especially laid on this thought of the subordination of the commercial to the moral interests by a certain correlation which evidently existed in the apostle's mind between what the Corinthians had expended in a material way and what they had gained in a spiritual way; the spiritual gain is vastly greater than the material expense. The same thought nearly underlies his own voluntary "loss" of all things for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ (Phil. 3: 8). Kindred to this thought is the apostle's thought of the incompatibility of full Christian development with absorption in business cares (2 Tim. 2: 4); and again the levelling of all values by the

impending passage of man (and of the world) from the material to the spiritual or eternal life (1 Cor. 7: 30).

On the other hand the apostle distinctly recognizes that it would be the height of folly to subordinate material to spiritual interests, if materialism is the true philosophy of the world (1 Cor. 15: 19); he thus gives us to understand that his apparent depreciation of earthly values is, after all, based on the highest and best business principles, which lead to the assignment of its true relative value to each object.

2. Another line of thought apparently in conflict with the main object of business life is drawn by the apostle from the *shortness of time* (1 Cor. 7: 28-31). "The time is short." This may mean that human life is of brief duration and hence all desire for wealth springing from the expectation of permanently possessing it is based on a weak foundation. Or it may mean that the second coming of Christ is at hand and will issue in a complete revolution in human affairs, in view of which it does not become the Christian to attach importance to earthly values. That this was a more prominent line of thought with the apostle in his oral teaching than appears in his epistles is evident from the misunderstanding of his words by the Thessalonians, certain of whom in consequence of his preaching had given up earthly occupations in the expectation of the Second advent (1 Thess. 3: 11). The apostle, however, corrects this wrong impression (2 Thess 2: 1 seq.), and with it all misunderstanding of the relation of his words to business life.

3. Another appearance of unbusiness-like thought in the apostle's mind may be found in those passages where he exhorts Christians to *assist* their needy brethren (Acts 20: 33-35; 1 Cor. 16: 1-9; 2 Cor. 8: 11-14; Eph. 4: 28) and those in which he speaks in commendatory terms of such aid already given (Gal. 2: 10; Phil. 4: 15-20). Of course there is a sense in which this aid is beneficial to the giver and commercial advantages accrue from its bestowal to the one who has bestowed; and this argument for giving to benevolent objects even of the least plausible kind is rightly insisted on in modern times; but it is evident that St. Paul was not thinking of the benefits which the rich churches of

the West would reap from sending aid to the distressed churches of Palestine. He simply enjoins it as a duty.

4. Again, when the apostle distinctly inveighs against *the sins* which grow out of business relations and employments he seems to undervalue these. Thus *covetousness* is especially objectionable to him. It is found in all his extended lists of sins (Rom. 1: 29-32; 1 Cor. 5: 10; 6: 8-10; Eph. 5: 3-6; Col. 3: 5). He alludes to it as a flagrant vice (Eph. 4: 19). In these passages, however, the sin is not looked upon with reference to its relations to commerce. This is done distinctly and emphatically in 1 Tim. 6: 9, 10.

On the other hand the positive virtue of contentment is extremely desirable to the apostle. He exhorts men to it (2 Cor. 9: 8; 1 Tim. 6: 6, 8); he speaks in tones of almost boastfulness of his own contentment in poverty (Phil. 4: 11). Now there is nothing that gives more force to the life of business than earnest aspiration and apparent discontent. The business man who thinks he is rich enough is ready to retire from business. It is not, of course, meant that the apostle does discourage aspiration, but that he seems to do so by insisting on contentment in poverty and denouncing the desire for gain.

Another danger to which he calls attention is that of *reversing the relative positions of the Gospel and of wealth*. He knew men who actually thought of making godliness a means of gain (1 Tim. 6: 5; cf., also 2 Cor. 2: 17).

Still another evil arising from the commercial spirit is the accumulation of riches and the consequent development of *pride* and *hard-heartedness* (1 Tim. 6: 17, 18).

It appears then that St. Paul was not so thoroughly possessed by commercial thoughts but that he could insist on finding a place for the decalogue in the counting-house. Not only would he refuse to divorce his religion and business, but he would insist on taking his religion into his business to be used as the dominating principle. Business to him is a department of life, which must be sanctified by the entrance into it of the Holy Spirit, like eating and drinking it must be begun, carried on and ended to the glory of God. The interests involved in it are subordinate and instrumental to the growth of the soul.

But in this subordinate place the apostle concedes to business all the importance it can claim. He realizes the principles which should underly its successful administration and in allusions to its methods, such as they were during his lifetime, he shows in his own personal constitution several of the fundamental requisites of a sound business character.

1. First among these we may place his *appreciation of values*. Passing over a large number of expressions in which by the use of single words metaphorically he shows his participation in the ordinary business relations of life, we may mention more especially those figures in which the redemption effected by Christ is represented as a purchase (1 Cor. 6: 20; 7: 23). From the point of the redeemed this salvation is a free gift; and as such it is sharply distinguished from a salvation earned by labor bestowed by the saved, or price paid by them (Rom. 3: 24; 4: 4; 11: 6; 1 Cor. 9: 7 seq.; 2 Cor. 9: 15; 11: 8; Gal. 2: 21; Eph. 2: 4-10). In the last passage the distinction between a purchased and a free salvation is so clearly brought out that the consequences of neglecting it are fully realized. There is no confusion in the apostle's mind as to these underlying principles of the Gospel dispensation, which are analogous, if not identical with the principles underlying ordinary commerce.

More directly this appreciation of the distinction between a gift and something earned appears in the passages already mentioned in which the apostle recognizes the value of his personal services but waives the compensation due him for them, or in other words transfers from the one to the other of these distinct spheres his own work (1 Cor. 16: 17; 2. Cor. 10: 7, 8; 12: 13; 1 Thess. 2: 9; 2 Thess. 3: 8, 9). Slightly different and yet substantially the same is the sentiment of that single passage in which the apostle with great tenderness of feeling and delicacy of expression accepts a gift of money from those to whom he had ministered (Phil. 4: 15).

Again, the apostle knows the sound business principle, which is valid in other employments and spheres of action of a *commensurate compensation* to the *expenditure invested* in an enterprise. His application is in the sphere of agriculture

(2 Cor. 9: 6-10). He who sows sparingly must reap sparingly; he who sows lavishly will have a lavish harvest.

He appreciates more fully if possible the *money value of labor*. He uses the figure of labor and wages in speaking of the relation of sin and its penalty—death (Rom. 6: 23), and of service rendered to the Master and the reward promised and to be paid by Him (Col. 3: 24). The gospel is free and hence the saved cannot claim salvation as a reward or wages (Rom. 4: 4; 1 Cor. 3: 14). Church work is a form of labor and a ground of commendation and reward (Rom. 16: 12; 1 Cor. 16: 16). It creates certain rights (1 Tim. 5: 17, 18). Ordinary manual labor and its results are equivalent to property. Refusal to work is deservedly a ground of want: "If any will not work neither let him eat" (2 Thess. 3: 10). The apostle himself worked "with his own hands" for a livelihood (Acts 18: 1-3; 1 Cor. 4: 12; 9: 6; 1 Thess. 2: 9; 2 Thess. 3: 8). He recommended manual labor as a means of usefulness through the income it brings (Acts 20: 33-35; Eph. 4: 28); also as the normal and morally right condition of life (1 Thess. 4: 11). *Waste or loss of labor* St. Paul considers an evil. His own labor among certain people, unless it should issue in good results he looks upon with sadness as wasted (Gal. 4: 11; 1 Thess. 3: 5). He warns the Thessalonians against idleness—waste of time (2 Thess. 3: 11, 12) and calls Timothy's attention to a certain class of women, who were accustomed to pass their time in wasteful and vain conversation (1 Tim. 5: 13) and quotes Epimenides against the Cretans, ascribing this to them as a peculiar vice (Tit. 1: 11).

2. Another characteristic of the sound business man in St. Paul is his *foresight*. There are two considerations which naturally reduce his evincing this trait as fully and clearly as some others; first his mission and object is not commercial and he must show it, if at all, indirectly and in other than strictly business affairs; and secondly the peculiar kind of faith inculcated by primitive Christianity called upon men to give up earthly possessions and seek in Jesus Christ their all in all; to leave all they had and trust to the Divine Providence for their sustenance in case their ordinary wealth or

business was inconsistent with the profession of the Gospel. Such faith, especially in the minds of men who could not distinguish between anxiety and forethought, was liable to be affected unfavorably by distinct recommendations to plan for and forecast the future and take advantage of its probabilities. Yet that St. Paul did allow himself and others to provide for the future appears not merely from his general appeals to the forecasting instincts of man in urging acceptance of the Gospel, but also from specific statements such as Rom. 12: 17; 2 Cor. 8: 21, and 1 Tim. 5: 8.

3. One more trait of the business man in the apostle is his *precision*. His clearness of apprehension and logical mode of presenting the cardinal teachings of the Gospel are very well-known; they are but a part of the same disciplined character, which would be punctual and precise in meeting obligations. St. Paul was not inclined to allow looseness in the management of affairs any more than in the conception and expression of thought. We have already spoken of the numerous expressions which indicate that he constantly kept before his mind the clear and sharp distinction between a gift freely bestowed and a business claim. We may mention in addition his sense of the *inviolability of a contract*. On this principle the apostle builds an argument (Gal. 3: 15). If among men a contract once made is binding, how much more so as between men and God. Further, the only direct reference in the whole range of his writings to a commercial account is his assuming the debts which Onesimus may have honestly or dishonestly contracted towards Philemon (Philemon 18, 19). The apostle's sense of the validity of these debts is so vivid and his appreciation of the evil which might ensue from a mere cancellation of them without sufficient compensation to the injured party so profound that he undertakes to pay them himself, though reminding Philemon at the same time, that aside from Onesimus, if their relations were to be reduced to a mere business basis Philemon would find himself a debtor to Paul. And this was not an exception to his ordinary rules. He gives us, occasionally, glimpses of his appreciation even of technical forms, though in other matters than business strictly speaking. In athletics, for

instance, one must contend lawfully (i. e., in accordance with forms laid down even though arbitrarily) or else he cannot be crowned (2 Tim. 2: 5). Speaking of a debt the apostle insists that it must be rendered to a special creditor having a special claim on the debtor (Rom. 13: 7). His sense of his own obligation to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles is a debt contracted to men and must needs be paid (Rom. 1: 15). As a rule the apostle is averse to debts and would have them paid off as soon as possible (Rom. 13: 8), having no doubt a secret insight into the perils of the "credit system."

Finally, St. Paul everywhere inculcates fidelity and conscientiousness in the performance of all duties; and this no doubt is the key to all successful commercial transactions.